

## **Overview of the Delta Plan Amendment for Conveyance, Storage Systems, and the Operations of Both**

The Delta Stewardship Council is amending the Delta Plan to promote options for water conveyance, storage systems, and the operation of both as required by Water Code Section 85304. The draft amendment includes a suite of recommendations for Delta water management system operations and supporting infrastructure improvements that, together and in combination with existing Delta Plan policies and recommendations, can further the coequal goals. This amendment promotes options for, and characteristics of conveyance, storage and operations that contribute to a coordinated system with improved flexibility that's necessary to achieve the coequal goals. This amendment would modify various relevant chapters of the Delta Plan, the majority being in Chapter 3, adding to the narrative and the recommendations and policies already described in the chapter.

This amendment is proposed to be included as part of the overall Delta Plan that was originally adopted by the Council in May 2013. The Delta Plan is comprised of 8 chapters, was guided by the comprehensive requirements of the Delta Reform Act, and was shaped over the course of 3 years through multiple public drafts, including over one hundred public meetings.

While the Delta Plan CSO amendment has a specific focus, it is intended to work together with the other existing Delta Plan elements, including recommendations and regulatory policies that reduce risk and protect water quality, high-priority habitat areas, Delta as Place values, and more. The Delta Plan CSO draft should be read in tandem with Delta Plan requirements to reduce reliance and increase regional self-reliance, and with the Delta Plan's guidance regarding more natural, functional flows for the ecosystem.

### **Need for Amendment**

To achieve the coequal goals, there is a need to change the way water is managed and water systems are operated in and around the Delta. Maintaining the status quo has posed significant risk to habitat and declining species, as well as uncertainty in water supplies exported from the Delta, which does not achieve the State's coequal goals.

Operational changes needed to achieve the coequal goals will not be possible without new investments in water infrastructure, namely improvements to water conveyance and storage facilities. Further, operational and infrastructure improvements need to progress together and in coordination with other actions identified in the Delta Plan, such as those related to restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem, improving water quality, achieving greater regional self-reliance and reduced reliance on the Delta, and reducing risks to people and property.

Periodic reviews and updates may be made to the Delta Plan in response to changing circumstances and conditions. Additionally, the Delta Plan states: *Should the BDCP process not be completed by January 1, 2016, the Council intends to revisit the issue of*

*conveyance to determine how to facilitate improved conveyance facilities without the BDCP.* In response to this commitment and the need to improve water management integration and flexibility to help further the coequal goals, the Council is developing the draft Delta Plan CSO amendment. The draft amendment is based upon the 19 *Principles for Water Conveyance in the Delta, Storage Systems, and for the Operation of Both to Achieve the Coequal Goals* adopted by the Delta Stewardship Council in November 2015.

#### Intent

With the draft Delta Plan Amendment for Conveyance, Storage Systems, and the Operation of Both (Delta Plan CSO amendment), the Council is seeking to influence and integrate conveyance and storage projects, and their operations, in a way that helps further the coequal goals. These provisions are recommendations; they are not regulations. They are intended to provide guidance to agencies implementing projects but do not control a project's consistency with the Delta Plan under Water Code section 85225, or any appeal to the Council of a certification under Water Code sections 85225.5 et seq. These new recommendations would complement existing Delta Plan policies and recommendations that are relevant to conveyance, storage, or operations projects.

The draft Delta Plan CSO amendment promotes a suite of options for new and improved infrastructure relating to water conveyance in the Delta, storage systems, and the operation of both. Options promoted include the design, implementation, and operation of new and improved water conveyance infrastructure and new or expanded water storage.

The draft Delta Plan CSO amendment describes the types and characteristics of infrastructure that could contribute to the coequal goals, and also identifies recommended criteria for project proponents to use in evaluating and developing new conveyance and storage projects. For example, the draft amendment encourages new or expanded groundwater storage projects that promote conjunctive management of surface water and groundwater supplies; it also recommends that new projects develop operating plans to meet specific and measurable targets and objectives, and incorporate adaptive management.

#### Organization of Recommendations

The Delta is a complicated system and single projects or actions are not capable of achieving the coequal goals. The Delta Plan presents a package of policies and recommendations that need to be implemented together to further the coequal goals. Similarly, the draft amendment includes a package of Delta water management system operations and supporting infrastructure improvement recommendations that, together and in combination with other actions called for in the Delta Plan, can further the coequal goals.

Consistent with Water Code Section 85304, the draft amendment promotes options for conveyance, storage systems, and the operations of both. The options describe the types of actions or projects that should be undertaken by a variety of State, federal and

local entities. However, the options do not prescribe the construction or implementation of specific projects or project proposals currently underway, nor do they describe the specific size, location, or configuration of such projects. Those project specifics would be the responsibility of the project proponents themselves.

The draft amendment is organized into the following sections:

- Introduction – An overview of historic and current conditions in the Delta.
- Amending the Delta Plan – Background on the basis of the proposed Delta CSO amendment.
- Problem Statement – Summary of the need for this amendment and the challenges faced in the Delta and across the State of California as related to achieving the coequal goals while protecting and enhancing the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place.
- Conclusion – A draft suite of recommendations the Delta Plan could promote for the design, implementation, and operation of new and improved water conveyance infrastructure and new or expanded water storage to achieve the coequal goals. Recommendations are organized into the following subsections:
  - I. *New and Improved Water Conveyance*
  - II. *New and Improved Water Storage*
  - III. *Improve Operations of Storage and Conveyance*

All promoted options should be managed so Delta water supplies further the coequal goals and incorporate the best currently available science and adaptive management.

The draft Delta CSO amendment also includes the following attachments:

- Attachment A – A timeline of major conveyance, storage, and operations projects and milestones related to Delta water management in the State.
- Attachment B – A list of performance measures relevant to the draft Delta CSO amendment.
- Attachment C – A representative map showing the soil suitability index for groundwater banking projects on agricultural lands.
- Attachment D – List of references cited in the draft Delta CSO amendment.